

CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER ENCOURAGES SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES TO SEEK FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR DEPLOYMENT OF LATEST BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY

Community Connect Broadband Grant Program Provides New Opportunity for Deployment of High-Speed Internet Services

(Washington, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher today encouraged Southwest Virginia localities to apply for federal assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS). The Community Connect Broadband Grant program, which is being administered by the RUS, has announced that \$8.9 million in federal grant funding is now available to rural towns and communities for the establishment of high-speed telecommunications services where no broadband services currently exist.

"Approximately ten years ago, I encouraged local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents throughout our region. My goal in making this recommendation was to set our region apart in comparison to other rural areas in the nation with the goal of making us more attractive than the typical rural region, to attract the new industry that requires access to broadband networks and to create technology-based jobs for Southwest Virginians. The Community Connect Broadband Grant program which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture represents an outstanding opportunity for the communities of Southwest Virginia to obtain federal grant assistance in establishing high-speed Internet access and other broadband services," Boucher said.

The Community Connect Broadband Grant program is a competitive federal grant program which enables communities to connect the essential services of police, fire protection, local government, hospitals, libraries and schools to broadband telecommunications services. **"The next step is to extend access to the high-speed Internet and other broadband services to residents and businesses of the community,"** Boucher added.

Applicants to the Community Connect program must submit a grant application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture no later than May 31, 2005. Electronic grant applications may be submitted at www.grants.gov. Detailed instructions are available on the website. Completed paper applications must be mailed to:

USDA Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2845
Stop 1550
Washington, D.C. 20250-1550

"Establishing access to high-speed Internet services throughout Southwest Virginia is a central component of our economic development strategy for the region. The federal Community Connect Broadband Grant Program represents an unparalleled opportunity for our communities to obtain significant federal grants to establish broadband networks throughout Southwest Virginia," Boucher concluded.

All interested Ninth District communities should contact Laura Lee in Congressman Boucher's Abingdon office for assistance in applying for the federal program. They may be reached via telephone at (276) 628-1145 or via e-mail at ninthnet@mail.house.gov.